

# LEARNING ABOUT TEACHING TOGETHER:

## A JUNIOR FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY'S ADVENTURES "ON THE ROAD TO TENURE"

ANUBHUTI THAKUR, PHD; KIREN DOSANJH-ZUCKER, JD

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

### THE DESTINATION

Give faculty members traveling the "road to tenure" an opportunity to share experiences, offer and gain support, and create a community of peers on campus.

On the road to tenure, you do not have to travel alone.

### THE ROADMAP

Three participant-driven discussions each on a topic relevant to the "Retention, Tenure, and Promotion" (RTP) process, with scenarios both developed by the facilitator and submitted by participants.

### THE "PIT STOPS"

SESSION 1: Learning as we Teach

SESSION 2: Research and Grants at CSUN

SESSION 3: Service Opportunities: Where, What and How?

### TEACHING SCENARIO 1

#### WHO HAS THE KEY?

Prof. Greene was asked to "start locking the door five minutes after the beginning of class" to deter students from arriving late to class. Following this advice led to several students missing lectures. One student evaluation that semester said, "Unfortunately, the main concern I had with this class was missing out on the lectures because she would lock the doors and not let students in. I understand timeliness is important and must be encouraged, however, when commuting to school from a distance for an 8 am class, it is not fair to be left out for being 5 minutes late."

- What are the conflicting values at stake?
- What issues regarding the evaluation process are presented in this scenario?
- How should Prof. Greene interpret and respond to the student evaluation?
- What should Prof. Greene do?

### TEACHING SCENARIO 2

#### ANY (MORE) QUESTIONS?

A student is unhappy with the scores he was getting on his exams (about a B+ average... much higher than the class average). He thought the professor was somewhat incompetent, unknowledgeable or unfair. He would regularly challenge the instructor in class and came to her office hours to argue. The professor couldn't quite figure out the best way to shut it down quickly without doing something that would turn the rest of the class against her or give them the impression I was running away from his challenges.

- What are the issues at hand in this situation?
- What actions can you recommend in this situation?
- Should this student be ignored, reported, or confronted?

### TEACHING SCENARIO 3

#### TEA(CHING) AND SYMPATHY:

One of Prof. Tribbiani's students comes to class extremely disheveled and never completes assignments on time. The student approaches him to discuss her problem and states that she is under extreme pressure from home, and that he must understand as they are both Italian. Upon being advised to visit student counseling services, the student mentions that she had already done so, and had been diagnosed with depression and social anxiety. However, she continues, she does not want to take the medication prescribed to her. After speaking empathetically with her once, he finds her outside his office door prior to class, crying and asking to discuss her personal problems.

- What should Prof. Tribbiani do?
- Where does one draw the line between mentoring and counseling?
- What are the possible consequences of your recommended action(s)?

### THE COMMUNITY



### RESEARCH

- Research interests and collaboration opportunities.
- Sharing experiences with applying for, receiving and managing grants.
- Creating and managing a research plan.
- Where do we find the time for scholarship amid our teaching loads?
- Other scenarios, concerns, questions and ideas you wish to add.

### SERVICE

- Service experiences at department, college university and community level
- Community service support available at the university
- How much is too little service? Is there something as too much service?
- Should I create a service record along a certain theme?
- Collaboration on service
- Other scenarios, concerns, questions and ideas you wish to add.

### REFLECTIONS

Through this discussion group, I gained:

- Relationships/community with peers on campus
- Insight into peers' experiences in other departments
- Guidance from peers on the tenure-track

One idea that I want to remember is:

- We get too busy with our work and sometimes isolate ourselves but I have found these meetings are very helpful.
- Methods of dealing w/students
- Ways to be proactive and create my own opportunities
- Support and feedback very helpful

### GUIDEPOSTS

- Participant-driven discussions work well: Scenarios/discussion questions gathered prior to the group meeting.
- A "where do we go from here" session at end of the discussion group's scheduled meetings as a chance to take leadership role in maintaining and strengthening the community they have formed.

➤ "Teaching" might be covered in more than one session, each with a more specific topic e.g. classroom civility and management; academic learning; and interpreting student evaluation

- Develop "teaching exchanges" where participants visit each other's classes, meet before and after the visit.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Upcoming discussion groups:

- Challenges to academic freedom
- Teaching in challenging times: challenges and opportunities in the faculty role
- Taxpayers vs. Academics? The Public View of Universities.

Special thanks to all participants of the discussion groups for their input and enthusiasm